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PdA gets 'God' for two-month show

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
for The Gazette

What makes Yvon Deschamps run?

The 46-year old monologuist demonstrated he is without doubt the most popular and beloved entertainer in Quebec by opening his new show this week at Theatre Maisonneuve — a two-month stint, the longest in Place des Arts history.

The record engagement is more significant when one considers that, after years of telling tales about irrepressibly hopeless Quebecois caricatures, Deschamps has created a totally new direction for his humor by abandoning his local heroes and plunging into a whimsical fantasy world.

Why and how he does it is perhaps best explained by describing Deschamps as three separate people.

First, he is a comic — a clown, a nut, a bumbling buffoon with a squeaky Stan Laurel cry of fear.

Then, he is the comfortable middle-class independentist, a Quebecer who ridicules the hick provincial mores of his protagonists as well as the anglophone "boss".

Finally, he is a humanist, a public figure who has worked much harder for OXFAM than he has for the Pequistes, a wit who invests his local characters with the human frailties and burdens of all.

Supershow

All three personnages are at the source of the "supershow" of Deschamps career, and they took a year to coagulate. His recent theatrical part in the two-person L'Ouvre-Boite and small tours of Ontario and the Maritimes allowed him time to ponder something new.

Over the previous two decades, he has been a messenger boy in the Radio-Canada discoteque, played the role of Pylade in Andromaque, played drums for Claude Lveillee, appeared in French-Canadian comedy and children's TV series, helped found le Theatre de Quat'sous, enjoyed a long run at the TNM's Fantastiks, costarred with Robert Charlebois in the revolutionary revue l'Osstidcho, and, in 1968, stepped out on his own with the famous monologues about Les Unions, Le Boss, L'Argent, Cable-TV, Le Petit Jésus, and La liberation de la femme, all seen through the eyes of his poor little Quebecois.

During that time he released eight discs that've sold over 100,000 copies each within the province — not to mention his roles in hit local movies like Deux femmes en or, and his charity work.

Milk the past

Lesser artistes, both provincial and international, have tended to milk the past after hitting the top plateaus but Deschamps is possessed with a drive that seeks unlimited expression. He wants us to forget the old routines and characters for now and enter with him on fantasy interpretations of Creation, Nature, Adam and Eve ...

Not only has Deschamps dispensed with the local themes, but he is relying less on the stand-up style of performing. He now utilizes the entire stage to create his new fantasy world, with 10 projectors providing an unfolding array of visual effects (devised by Jean Biasonnette). He plays numerous characters, not the least of which is God ("I make a good God, he winks).

There is now more integration of his musicians in the finely paced series of sketches; in fact, one number incorporates a soundtrack based on reels, catalypso, and opera. To this end he's been blessed with the participation of a fine band featuring such Ville Emard alumni as guitarist Serge Valliéres, bassist Michel Dion, and keyboardist Yvan Ouellet.

Irreverence

Deschamps irreverence gives his sketches on the real will of God a slapstick quality. But he maintains a more tense level of humor in his discursions of Heresy, "La Peur" and Death (this as seen from someone who earns $52 clear per week). If the comedian seems slightly more prone to sentimentality here (much in the same way of Charlie Chaplin or Jerry Lewis), it's probably because Deschamps' humanist feelings have gotten the better of his more sensitive exploratory wit.

But this is his boldest step. Although "Le boss" is not there anymore, Yvon Deschamps is now one of his own characters as he navigates this two-month performance at Place des Arts. Thus, it's a show worth seeing more than once — if you can manage to cadge a ticket the first time round.

Deschamps: Heroes give way to fantasy — Gazette, Michael Dugas

Moreau explores Quebec culture

Navel gazing and Bill 22

Tabaslak savagely absorbing

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
for The Gazette

With Jean-Guy Moreau's show at the Outremont Cinema coinciding with the beginning of Yvon Deschamps', we have a unique opportunity to watch the two finest comic wits of Quebec in the most ambitious projects of their careers.

Like Deschamps, he attracted attention with Charlebois in a musical-comedy revue Terre Des Bums, in 1967 (a year before Ostidcho), but until a year or so ago his ferocious local mimickry took a back seat to others. It was in his Place des Arts stepping-out in April 1974, that he not only proved himself to be one of the most technically gifted impressionists anywhere but also that Quebec's most savage satirist.

Moreau's last show featured a parade of personalities whose vanities he mocked, drawing parallels between politicians and entertainers with Quebec as the playground. In the current show, entitled Tabaslak, he extends his talents beyond the more conventional stand-up routines to present an explorative montage of Quebec culture over the years.

HISTORY

Co-authored by Jacqueline Barrette, Tabaslak starts with a dip into Quebec history, in which Moreau's absurdist humor illuminates the origins of the mongrel culture of la belle province.

He imitates Montcalm and Lord Durham and has the current Canadian political leaders making speeches at the founding of Quebec (including Stanfield and Caouette).

The historical flashbacks evolve into the current climate of Bill 22, and the second half of the show is devoted to a series of manic monologues on the state of the Quebecois language and culture by such local lights as Pierre Lalonde, Raymond Levesque, Gilles Vigneault and Sol.

Included is a sketch in which a "ben hip" chanteur is being interviewed by a smarmy-hip CHOM-FM disc jockey; both use one-upmanship to convey their hip goût de Quebec, with the singer resorting to the stoned-out American rock star cliche. "You know what I mean, man" to get the message across.

The language legislation inspires Moreau's dramatae personnae to engage in long spells of navel-gazing, a state of mind where the mangled qualities of the Quebecois identity control their enraptured pontifications on language.

Never before has Moreau attacked the subject so savagely, and its spirit has forced changes in his style.

Tabaslak is freewheeling and informal (less dependent on props than his last), allowing Moreau to dip into stream of consciousness and a more conceptual type of satire. As such, the impressionist-comic presents a most discursive analysis of Bill 22 etc. He gets so deep into it that there are times when you can't tell whether a character is saying something or whether it's plain joual onomatopoeia, he breaks out in frenetic bursts of cultural schizophrenia.

Tabaslak, at the Outremont tonight and next weekend, is so absorbing that even the flagging erratic moments seem to add to the tension of the performance.

Rock & Pop

by Juan Rodriguez

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Canada first

FCC's inquiry is now 'formal'

WASHINGTON — (CP) — Are Americans suffering financial hardship because Canada gets first crack at the top United States television shows?

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted yesterday to find out.

The commissioners voted 4-3 to issue a "formal notice of inquiry," setting Nov. 28 as the deadline for comment, with Dec. 8 the final date for rebuttal.

The three commissioners who voted against the inquiry are expected to file formal reasons later. However, it is known that certain of the commissioners feel that it's none of the FCC's business if TV program producers and distributors market their wares in Canada for release before they come up on U.S. screens.

American Broadcasting Companies, Inc. (ABC), supported by border stations from the Great Lakes to Maine, have asked the FCC to pass a rule preventing the practice.

The complainants protest that American viewers who can pick up Canadian channels are tuning out the U.S. stations when a program comes up later on the U.S. outlet.

In addition, they point out that the Canadian signals can be picked up and retransmitted by U.S. cable systems.

Producers and distributors argue that the FCC has no power to institute such a rule and that sales practices are no legitimate concern of the FCC.

The commission itself admitting there is "no body of data" to use as precedent, says it will seek comments on the question of whether pre-release arrangements "are harmful to the public interest or to private economic interests."

SPIN OFF

Springsteen's contrivances

They're calling Bruce Springsteen the 'new Bob Dylan', just as they've described Barry 'Eve of Destruction' Maguire and Don 'American Pie' McLean. In fact, Springsteen sounds more like these two than Dylan, just as his vocal mannerisms are not at all like the MacNugall St. maestro but rather like Bryan Ferry's.

Nevertheless, Springsteen's third album, **Born to Run** (on Columbia) has been hailed by many as something of an event. True, the singer's songs have that intimitably American largesse about them, but this seems more on account of the highblown production.

Another thing said about Springsteen is that he's an hypnotic stage rock 'n' roller. If that's so, you can't tell from his record, which is filled with melodramatic contrivances.

Two local groups made their recording debuts this week.

The Dudes, an outgrowth of the now defunct Workers, are off to an inauspicious start with **We're No Angels** (on Columbia). Recorded at Le Studio in Morin Heights, P.Q., which can surely produce a much more powerful sound, the album has fallen victim to the kind of tampered production that waters down the spontaneity of the group as a vehicle for superfluous overdubs.

Lead guitarist, singer and songwriter Bob Segarini has always been afflicted with an intense feeling for rock 'n' roll; he seems a cross between a rock historian and a groupie. Here, his affinity for rock (and its outgrowths, including a decided reggae touch) sounds stilted, hardly the stuff of their freewheeling stage romps.

Meanwhile, the subterranean world of the discotèque provides the fuel for Beauregard, Violletti & Sta. Claire, whose debut is entitled **En Plein Orgasme** (CBS). Plenty of breathy vocals and a mysterious soundtrack (by such crack local sessionmen as Walter Rossi and Richard Tate, and vocalists Nanette and Estelle St. Croix) are the ingredients of this apparently quick production. That's how it's done in Quebec.

The album is on the radio and in the discos, and could grab a European following (the jet-set there loves such cheapo exotica). If it flops, expenses are not so enormous to prohibit another try. — **Juan Rodriguez.**

Minstrels in transition

Jethro Tull's new album **Minstrel in the Gallery** appears to be a transition between their more complex recent albums and the simpler ones that are to come, according to group leader Ian Anderson. Ian Anderson is a self-confessed "Simple fellow," and the album benefits from a more simple approach. There is much nice acoustic guitar and some strong melodies.

The shorter pieces will please Tull fans of old, whereas the extended Baker Street Muse will be more recent devotees.

Cold Wind to Valhala (the title cut) and One White Duck on the Wall rank with some of Tull's best works, and the album itself is the best the band has done in quite a while.

Doug Pringle

Cannonball at the peak

There is a bitter sweetness in listening to the last recording of the Cannonball Adderley Quintet, just released, after the leader's death last August. Cannonball had finally reached wide recognition and acclaim, and was beginning to settle in what could have been a period of shining maturity.

Phenix (Fantasy), whose cover shows a smiling photograph of Cannonball surrounded by flames, bears a stirring quotation referring to the title: "In Egyptian mythology, a beautiful bird which lived in the Arabian desert for five or six hundred years and then consumed itself in fire, rising renewed from the ashes to start another long life; it is used as a symbol of immortality."

Since the album was produced by the Adderley brothers, with Orrin Keepnews, one might assume that Cannon knew about his impending death. An odd realization.

The selection of tunes makes this album a recap of some of Cannon's best known tunes: Work Song, Jive Samba, This Here, Hamba Nami, Country Preacher, Walk Tall and Mercy, Mercy, Mercy.

Other tunes had recently been added to the quintet's current repertoire: High Fly, Sack o' Woe, The Sidewalks of New York, 74 Miles Away and Stars Fell on Alabama.

Cannonball's playing is at an all time peak of mellowness and depth. He displays here a surety and a deliberateness of musical statements which endow his sound with an eerie finality.

His sidemen are all established masters, whether young or mature, and need no further recommendation, save for George Duke. His brilliant use of the synthesizers allows for string effects, especially on Sack o' Woe and This Here, which are a superb complement to the music.

Nighthawk

Country-folk at its best

Philo Records in Vermont has been releasing some amazing records lately. **Any Old Wind That Blows,** the third album by Californian Jim Ringer, probably qualifies as the best country-folk album of the last couple of years.

The 12 songs on the disc include four of Ringer's originals, two bluegrass standards, four country songs, one David Bromberg composition and one traditional tune. David Bromberg and his band provides much of the backup work, along with regular Philo session-men Martin Grosswendt, Doug MacLaren, and Alfred Gertler. Harmonies were sung by Mary McCaslin and Lyndon Hardy.

It's hard to pick the highlight off this album because there just isn't a weak cut — but Mrs. Dallas's Lament is a favorite. It's Ringer's version of the familiar Staggerlee story, and both this cut and California Blues feature delightful Dixieland horn arrangements by Peter Ekland, Billy Novick and Warren Nichols.

The fiddling of Jay Unger kicks off the record, and shines throughout especially on the Bill Monroe song Uncle Pen.

David Bromberg's guitar is a highlight on Saginaw, Michigan (the old Lefty Frizell hit) and on his own song New Lee Highway Blues. Martin Grosswendt's dobro playing is featured throughout, but perhaps the disc's most outstanding instrumental work is his spine-tingling bottleneck guitar intro to Sittin' On Top of the World.

And holding the whole thing together is the mellow, relaxed singing of Jim Ringer. An excellent album, not to be missed.

Mike Regenstreif

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